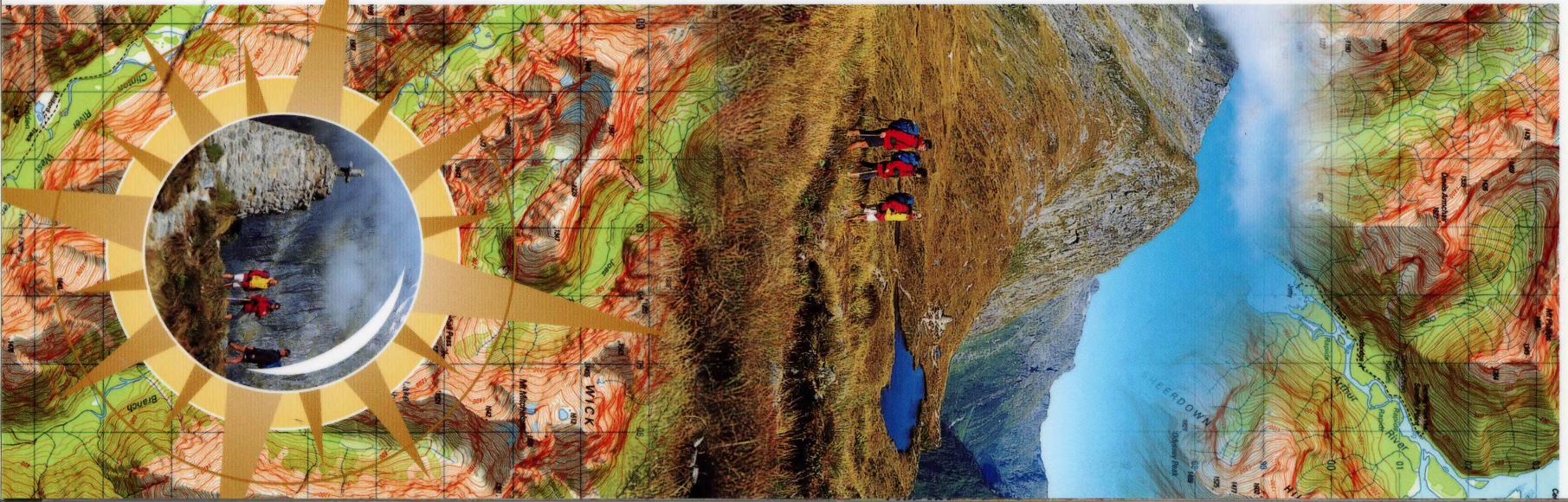
Milford Track
Guided Walk
NEW ZEALAND

Milford Track NAVIGATOR



ULTIMATE HIKES
NEW ZEALAND

The Milford Track

Traversing the heart of New Zealand's wild fiord country, the Milford Track has long been described as "the finest walk in the world." Since Quintin Mackinnon pioneered the route in 1888 everyone from hardened trekkers to novices sporting their first pair of boots has taken up the challenge of the Milford Track. The intention of this guide is to introduce walkers to the Milford Track, to provide information that will make your walk more enjoyable and to introduce you to the local forests, alpine flora, unique wildlife and the land shaping processes of mountain building and glaciation.

The Milford Track Guided Walk
In the Footsteps of History

Donald Sutherland, the first European resident of Milford Sound, discovered the Sutherland Falls in 1880, adding to Milford's reputation as the eighth wonder of the world. Sutherland started building a track up the Arthur Valley so visitors could be shown his falls, but access was limited by the rugged Fiordland coast therefore finding an overland route from the great lakes of the interior became imperative.

In September 1888 Quintin Mackinnon and Ernest Mitchell set off to build a track up the Clinton Valley, at the northern end of Lake Te Anau. Persistent rain soaked them to the skin, wet all available firewood and eventually caused a flood which washed their provisions away. After beating a retreat to Te Anau Downs for new supplies they returned to the valley, and on 16 October 1888 crossed a pass which lead to the Arthur Valley, Sutherland Falls and Milford Sound.

The pass was named in honour of Mackinnon and the first track was completed within two years. In 1890 it was a lengthy expedition to Milford Sound. Mackinnon, who was the first guide, did his best with Kaka (a native parrot) and pigeon stew and his famous pompolonas (scones made from mutton fat candles). It was not uncommon to be hut bound by flooding for several days at a time and at the end of it all you had to walk back the way you came.

In 1892 Mackinnon set off in a whale boat to the head of the lake, never to be seen again. You will pass the monument in Lake Te Anau on your way to Glade House. Donald and Jack Ross took over track operations, which they continued until 1903.

Huts were built near Lake Mintaro in 1894 and also at the six mile mark, known as Mid Camp. The first Glade House was built on its present site in 1895 and opened in early 1896, the first huts were built near Quintin in 1897. The New Zealand Government Tourism Department bought Glade House and assumed direct administrative control of the track in 1903. The first hut was built on the site of Pompolona in 1906 and this replaced the Lake Mintaro lodgings, pack horses were also introduced this year.

The Milford Track was now well on its way to being established, with many new developments. The first footbridge over the Arthur River was built in 1909, only to survive two seasons. The Quintin Mackinnon Memorial Cairn was built in 1912. The outbreak of World War 1 saw the track close from 1914 to 1918, as did World War 2 which closed the track from 1943 to 1947.

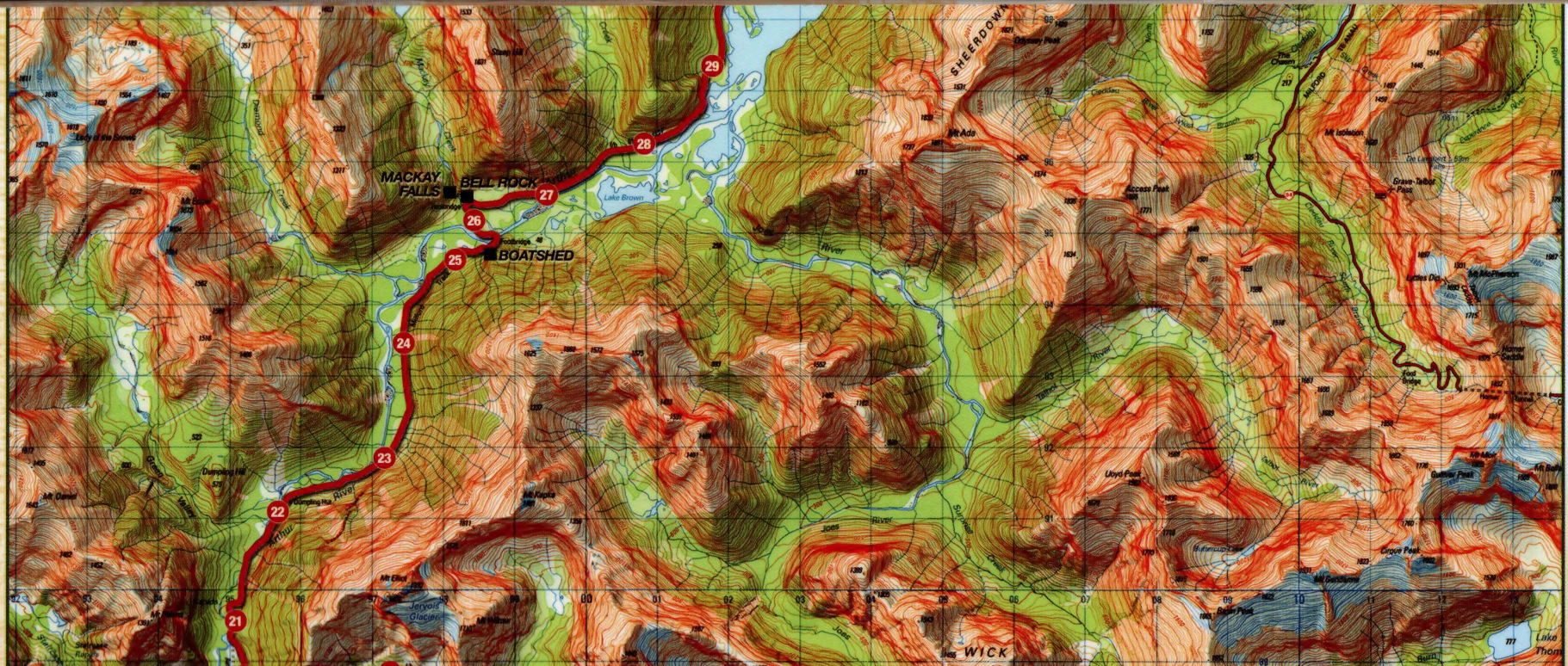
The period between wars saw accommodation provided for walkers at Sandfly Point in 1920, Glade Wharf washed away by flood in 1924, Pomopolona damaged by avalanche in 1925, the Sandfly Point huts destroyed by fire in 1926 and Glade House destroyed by fire in 1928 with reconstruction completed in 1930. The original hut on Mackinnon Pass, built in 1928, was blown down twice between 1928 and 1947. A new hut was completed in 1958 only to be blown down again in 1968. An A-frame hut was built in 1969 and replaced by the current hut in 1982.

The first non guided "freedom walkers" walked the track in 1964 and three huts at Clinton Forks, Lake Mintaro and Dumpling Hill were established for independent walkers.

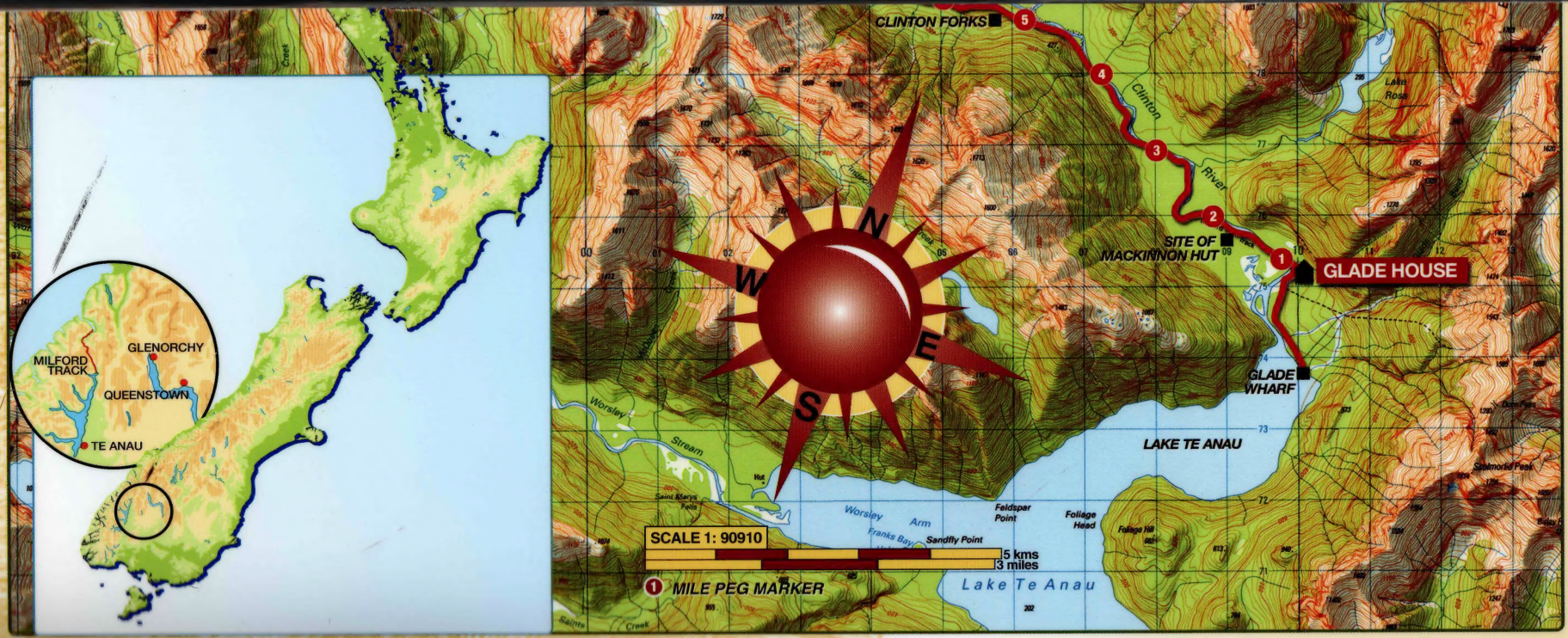
Supplies were originally brought in by boat and packhorse but in 1969 the Quintin airstrip was completed which began supply by light aircraft. In 1970 a tractor path was completed as far as Pompolona which meant the end of packhorse supply. However major flooding in 1978 destroyed the path and altered the landscape making reconstruction impractical. Nowdays the lodges are served by a combination of boat, light aircraft, vehicles and helicopters.

A SELECTION OF THE FLORA AND FAUNA TO BE FOUND ALONG THE TRACK:
1. Maori Onion 2. Pineapple Scrub 3. Yellow Marguerite 4. Mountain Daisy 5. South Island Bush Robin
6. South Island Fox Glove 7. Mount Cook Lily 8. New Zealand Kea.

MITRE PEAK LODGE
SANDFLY POINT
GIANT'S GATE FALLS
Milford Sound
Bowen Peak
Mitre Peak
Pater Point
Bridget Point
Williamson Point
Cascade Peak
Sinbad Gully
Deepwater Basin
Arthur River
Shoulder Hill
Shoulder Hill
Shoulder Hill


MACKAY FALLS
BELL ROCK
BOATSHED
SHEERDOWN
WICK
Lake Brown
Lake Thom
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

QUINTIN LODGE
SUTHERLAND FALLS
MACKINNON MEMORIAL
LAKE MINTARO
ST QUINTIN FALLS
POMPOLONA LODGE
BUS STOP
HIDDEN LAKE
HIRERE FALLS LUNCH HUT
19
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
Lake Quill
Mt Balloon
Mt Michelsen
Lake Iceberg
Clinton River
North Branch
Castle River
Barrier Peak
Castle Mount
Mt Forno
Hidden Lake
Hirere Falls
Neale Burn
Lake Sumner


MILFORD TRACK
GLENORCHY
QUEENSTOWN
TE ANAU
CLINTON FORKS
5
4
3
2
1
Clinton River
SITE OF MACKINNON HUT
GLADE HOUSE
GLADE WHARF
LAKE TE ANAU
Lake Te Anau
Worsley Stream
Worsley Arm
Franks Bay
Sandfly Point
Feldspar Point
Foliage Head
Foliage Hill
Saint Mary's Falls
Hut
Lake Rose
Smirnoff Peak
N
W
E
S
SCALE 1: 90910
5 kms
3 miles
1 MILE PEG MARKER

Tips for your trip

- Please remember at all times not to litter and to refrain from feeding the wildlife, as it disrupts their normal feeding patterns and encourages scavenging habits.
- If conditions are very wet, walkers are encouraged not to try and skirt around puddles as this damages the track verges. It only delays the inevitable of feet getting wet, as streams and surface flooding will have to be negotiated.
- Don't place your boots in the drying rooms, as the heat is too severe on the glues used on the soles and it damages the leather. An alternative is to place them in there closer to lights out time, as the room slowly cools over night. The priority is to get the group's clothing dry first, before overcoats/packs/boots etc...
- For safety reasons there is always a guide at the back of the party. If you leave the main track, please put your pack on the side of the track as an indicator to the guide so they do not walk ahead of you.
- Water should be consumed throughout the day, little amounts often. This simple rule aids in stopping dehydration and prevents tiredness at day's end.

KEA

DEAD LAKE

Track Times & Distances

Milford Track Walking Times and Distances

	kms / miles	times
Day 1		
Glade House Wharf to Glade House	1.2 / 0.8	1/4 - 1/2 hour
Day 2		
Glade House to Mackinnon's Hut Site	1.6 / 1.0	1/4 - 1/2 hour
Mackinnon's Hut Site to Clinton Hut	1.5 / 1.0	1/4 - 1/2 hour
Clinton Hut to Hirere Falls Lunch Hut	7.0 / 4.5	2-3 hours
Hirere Falls Lunch Hut to Hidden Lake	1.5 / 1.0	1/4 - 1/2 hour
Hidden Lake to Pompolona Lodge	4.0 / 2.5	3/4 - 1 1/4 hours
Day 3		
Pompolona Lodge to Mintaro Hut	4.0 / 2.5	1 1/2 - 2 hours
Mintaro Hut to Mackinnon Memorial	4.0 / 2.5	2 - 2 1/2 hours
Mackinnon Memorial to Pass Hut	1.0 / 0.6	1/2 hour
Pass Hut to Platform Section	2.4 / 1.5	1 1/4 - 1 1/2 hours
Platform Section to Quintin Lodge	3.2 / 2.0	1 1/2 - 2 hours
Quintin Lodge to Sutherland Falls (optional)	5.0 / 3.0	1 1/2 hours *rtn*
Day 4		
Quintin Lodge to Dumpling Hut	3.2 / 2.0	3/4 - 1 hour
Dumpling Hut to Boatshed	5.6 / 3.5	1 1/2 - 2 hours
Boatshed to Mackay Falls	1.6 / 1.0	1/4 - 1/2 hour
Mackay Falls to Giant's Gate	5.6 / 3.5	1 3/4 - 2 hours
Giant's Gate to Sandfly Point	5.6 / 3.5	1 3/4 - 2 hours

MILFORD SOUND

Other Walks

Routeburn Track

The Routeburn Track Guided Walk is a three day all inclusive Queenstown to Queenstown alpine adventure, through World Heritage Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks.

Encounter Guided Day Walks

Guided fully catered one day walks on the Milford Track from Te Anau, the Routeburn Track from Queentown and from Mount Cook village, for those who only want to walk for a single day.

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ULTIMATE HIKES NEW ZEALAND

Milford Track Guided Walk NEW ZEALAND

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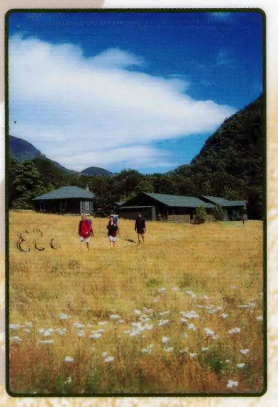
Milford Track

Milford Track Day One

Queenstown/Te Anau to Glade House
1.2km/0.8 miles – approx. 20 minutes walking

Having travelled from Queenstown via Te Anau to Te Anau Downs, you will board the launch for the cruise to the head of Lake Te Anau. Listen out to the Captain's commentary for your first introduction to the region's colourful history. Your first taste of the Milford Track will be the short walk from the jetty to Glade House, where you will be greeted with afternoon tea before embarking with your guides on a short nature walk to explore the surrounding area.



GLADE HOUSE

Milford Track Day Two

Glade House to Pompolona Lodge
16km/10 miles – 5-7 hours walking

Just beyond Glade House a suspension bridge crosses the Clinton River and the track leads into the Beech forest. One mile along you come to the site of Quintin Mackinnon's first hut built in 1889. A remnant from the days when a telephone line was strung along the length of the track can be seen on the tree to the left of the track.

CLINTON VALLEY

A circular sidetrack to an area known as the Wetland Walk is not far down on the left. It is well worth the 15 minute walk, as it provides a view to an area unique from the rest of the walk. For the next few miles the old packhorse trail is flat and wide, then begins to climb as it enters the west branch of the Clinton Valley. Named by pioneers 'the Valley of the Perpendicular' and it is easy to see why as the rock walls tower up to 4000 feet above you. The track continues through lush beech forest until interrupted by the rubble of a huge landslide, which fell in the early 80's, so large that it blocked the Clinton River and formed the lake around which the track now passes. Here you will find the 7 mile peg.

A stop for lunch is made at nearby Hirere Falls shelter, the falls themselves being visible across to the right side of the valley. After lunch you soon come to a clearing in the trees giving you your first view of the pass, which Mackinnon and Mitchell crossed in 1888 opening up the Milford Track. A little further on the track leads you past Hidden Lake, a great spot to see Scaup diving and feeding in the dark waters.

THE PRAIRIE

The track re-enters the Beech forest, passes the 9 mile peg and exits onto another open area called The Prairie, which gives great views of the permanent ice fields crowning the mountain tops. Rainy days bring out countless waterfalls here.

Shortly after the 10 mile peg, the track climbs and re-enters the Beech forest, coming to a basic shelter called Bus Stop, which will provide you shelter in the event of flooding. Ten minutes from here you reach Pompolona Lodge, where you can enjoy a well earned hot shower.

Milford Track Day Three

Pompolona Lodge to Quintin Lodge
15km/9 miles – 6-8 hours walking

An early start today. The trail leads to the upper reaches of the Clinton River and the three leaps of St Quintin Falls can be seen on the right-hand side of the canyon. Mt Balloon rears into view and the track gradually begins to climb.

CLINTON VALLEY FROM MACKINNON PASS

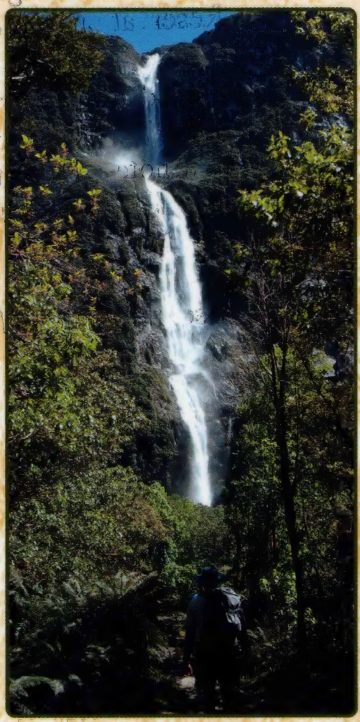
After passing the 12 mile peg you will notice that the surrounding bush has a devastated look due to the snow avalanches in springtime. Pass by a small lake on the left named the Mirror, before climbing the Practice Hill leading to Lake Mintaro at the top, orginally named Lake Beautiful by Mackinnon. Beyond the lake a suspension bridge crosses the upper reaches of the Clinton River, the first of a series of zigzags over two miles is next and when you pass the 15 mile peg you are half way up! An impressive view unfolds each step of the way as the Nicholas Cirque at the head of the Clinton Canyon comes into view.

TRACK DOWN FROM MACKINNON PASS

Once you reach the top all the effort will be worthwhile. Pause at the cairn constructed in 1912, a memorial to the efforts of Mackinnon and Mitchell in 1888. The area is a haven for Kea and flourishing alpine wild flowers in summer. There are a number of small mountain ponds (called tarns) dotted along the top of the pass as you head to Pass Hut for lunch. From here the track edges it's way around the base of Mt Balloon and down the 3.5 miles to Quintin Lodge.

Most people agree that this downhill section contains not only the hardest walking but also some of the most scenic views, from towering rock cliffs and moss covered forest to alpine glacial fed streams and a cascading waterfall section. On reaching the 19 mile peg you only have one mile to go, but save some energy for the last half mile which is steep and your knees will be tired.

Turning left at the sign at the bottom of the pass leads you over the Roaring Burn swingbridge and into Quintin Lodge. After a rest you may feel invigorated enough to take the 1½ hour round trip to the mighty Sutherland Falls, the world's fifth highest waterfall at 1904 ft/540m. Leave Quintin before 4.45pm so you have plenty of time to shower and get ready for dinner, a just reward for your day's efforts.



SUTHERLAND FALLS

Milford Track Day Four

Quintin Lodge to Mitre Peak Lodge
21km/13 miles – 6-8 hours walking

A final glimpse of the top two leaps of the mighty Sutherland Falls can be seen shortly after the 20 mile peg and after the descent down a rocky hill known as Gentle Annie, you come to the 21 mile peg. Pass an old slip face where the track flattens out and walking becomes easier as you enter lush green rainforest.

After passing the 23 mile peg the track breaks into the open and runs for a straight section known as the Race Course, as the early pack-horses used to try to pass each other along it.

MACKAY FALLS

From back in the bush catch views up to the left of Diamond Creek and Danger Mountain before arriving at Boatshed, built in 1928 to house boats used to move supplies up from Lake Ada. Time for a rest and morning tea break.

After Boatshed cross the Arthur River by swingbridge and on to Mackay Falls, a stunning waterfall in one of New Zealand's wettest areas. Situated next to it is Bell Rock, a hollowed out boulder that you can stand inside.

Leaving the falls you encounter another open area under the shadow of Steep Hill, before re-entering the bush and passing the 27 mile peg. From here the remainder of the walk is in the rainforest.

LAKE ADA

At Telegraph Point the track takes a sharp left turn, offering fantastic views down the Arthur Valley towards Milford Sound, with Lake Ada in the foreground. Climb up a rocky ledge cut into the mountainside, which was completed in 1898 eliminating the need to boat this section. As you near the 30 mile peg you may hear the steady roar of Giant's Gate Falls. On the right, just before the bridge is a lunch shelter, but in sunny weather cross the river and eat in view of the falls.

SANDFLY POINT

After lunch the track skirts alongside Lake Ada, with Mt Ada towering above on the far shore. The last two miles to Sandfly Point are wide and flat, this part of the track being built by 45 convicts over an 18-month period from 1890.

Just after the 33 mile peg, there is a fantastic view out to the right of Barren Peak over the Arthur River, and Sandfly Point is only 10 minutes away. The shelter here provides refuge from the elements and the sandflies while you wait for the ferry to take you over to Milford, to complete your journey on the Milford Track.

Milford Track Day Five

Milford Sound to Te Anau/Queenstown — No walking

After breakfast and check out, take the bus back to the wharf complex and embark on your Milford Sound cruise. Out on the fiord you realise the grandeur of the surrounding mountains, the centrepiece being Mitre Peak rising vertically over one mile from the water line. The fiord is a marine reserve and a haven for many marine animals. Look for Southern Fur Seals basking on the rocks after a night fishing.

MACKINNON PASS

Bottlenose and Dusky Dolphins are sometimes found swimming in schools, the latter often performing leaps and flips. In early summer the fiord is also home to the rare Fiordland Crested Penguin, which come into the fiord to mate and raise their young.

Milford's reputation as being one of the wettest places on earth is not unfounded. But don't be fooled into thinking you have to see it in fine weather, as Rudyard Kipling described it as the eighth wonder of the world, in rain!

On returning to the wharf, board your waiting coach and climb your way out from Milford Sound and on to Te Anau and Queenstown, completing your journey on "the finest walk in the world."

TRACK UP TO MACKINNON PASS